



Honorary Colonels Can Re-energize Your Unit

by Captain Dave Clark

History, heraldry, and heroes. The Armor and Cavalry Regimental System keeps all three of these alive in our mounted force. Every battalion or squadron carries before it the colors of a particular regiment. Emblazoned on those colors are the crest and motto of the regiment, framed in the campaign streamers of past battles which adorn its staff — battles which made our forefathers and their comrades heroes. They fought, bled, and often made the ultimate sacrifice for their brothers-in-arms, unit, and country.

The regiment and its traditions provide a vital link to that past and an important tool in building unit cohesion, pride, and esprit de corps.

Most soldiers affiliate with regiments for a variety of reasons: it was their first active duty assignment; they assumed command within that regiment; they have combat experience with the unit, or they want an assignment to a post that is home to a battalion of that regiment. Whatever the reason, it is usually with some amount of pride that a soldier wears his chosen regiment's crest on his uniform and barks the unit's motto when challenged.

The Armor and Cavalry force is currently finishing a massive series of redesignations as a result of the draw-down and restructuring of Army forces worldwide. The dizzying rearrangement of unit designations in the last 12 months has caused a degree of consternation among the mounted force — new patches to sew on, crests to buy, and new mottoes, songs, and histories to learn. What was once a dependable element in the unit has now departed, like so many soldiers who PCS. With the new set of colors comes a couple of dedicated spokesmen and champions of

the regiment: the Honorary Colonel and Honorary Sergeant Major.

An example of such a champion is MG(R) Ronald Fairfield, Jr., Honorary Colonel of the 69th Armored Regiment. A combat veteran of three wars and former battalion commander of 1-69 Armor, MG Fairfield was appointed the Honorary Colonel of the 69th Armor Regiment by the Secretary of the Army in 1987. During his tours as HCOR, he was the guest of honor at 10 of 11 battalion changes of command with the two battalions of the 69th stationed in CONUS — 2-69 and 3-69 respectively. He also conducted annual professional development seminars for both officers and NCOs, and wrote an average of 25 flag letters a month recognizing achievements by soldiers of the battalions. MG(R) Fairfield encourages units to, "Invite their Honorary Colonels for a visit so they can contact and get to know the soldiers." The most important thing the Honorary Colonel can contribute to the members of his regiment, according to MG(R) Fairfield, is heritage. "They can combine that past with the heritage they are making today, every day, and carry both with them into the future. Heritage is what the regiment is all about, the heritage that was, is today, and will be tomorrow."

As the Army force structure stabilizes and we become a CONUS-based contingency force, the esprit, teamwork, and sense of belonging afforded by the Regimental System takes on even greater importance. The best tool in a commander's bag for energizing pride in his battalion or squadron's regiment is the Honorary Program of Colonels and Sergeants Major of the Regiment. The purpose of the honorary program is to provide a link with history through the Honorary Colonel of the Regiment (HCOR) and the Honorary Sergeant Major of the Regiment (HSGMOR). The primary mission of the soldiers holding these honorary positions is to perpetuate the history and traditions of the regiment, thereby enhancing unit morale and esprit. This, in turn, helps the commander develop loyalty and commitment in his troops, fosters a sense of belonging, and institutionalizes the warfighting ethos. The HCOR and HSGMOR are credible sources who have lived through our Army's brilliant history and can relay their feelings and experiences about

their respective regiments in times of peace and conflict.

All Honorary Colonels are retired commissioned officers in the rank of colonel or above with former service in the regiment. The Honorary Colonel's duties include: service as a liaison between the regiment and regimental associations, attending regimental functions and command ceremonies, participating in award ceremonies, speaking on the regiment's history and traditions at dining-ins and similar functions, assisting in historical professional development programs for officers and NCOs, and presiding over regimental committees. The Honorary Sergeant Major is a retired NCO in the rank of sergeant first class or above who has former service with the regiment. The HSGMOR's duties are to assist the HCOR in perpetuating the history and lineage of the regiment and assist in maintaining an honorary program and its many aspects as listed for the HCOR.

Incorporating these helpful and important members into a unit's activities is a matter of commitment on the part of battalion and brigade commanders. Nothing is free in the military and this unfortunately applies to the Honorary Colonels and Sergeants Major program. Travel to both OCONUS/CONUS regimental functions is done by invitational travel orders funded by the installation or activity requesting the HCOR's or HSGMOR's presence. Reimbursement of incidental costs is not authorized, but regimental associations may be established to support honorary positions.

The Honorary Colonel and Sergeant Major can be a tremendous addition to a unit's regimental association, providing valuable role models for both officers and NCOs. A list containing names, locations, and biographies of the current HCORs and HSGMORs is maintained by the Armor Propensity Division of the Office, Chief of Armor (OCA). The OCA pamphlet, *Armor Regimental System, 1996* contains complete information on the Armor Regimental System, including current active regiments and HCORs/HSGMORs. This Fort Knox publication can be obtained by calling OCA directly at DSN 464-3188/1368, Commercial (502) 624-3188/1368, or by calling Armor Wide Training Support (AWTS) at DSN 464-2987, 24-Hr FAX 464-7554.